



Recreational Trails Program

Frequently Asked Questions
Technical Assistance Conference Call Workshops
Summer 2015

Questions and answers are organized in the following sections:

- GENERAL QUESTIONS (including funding)
- PROJECT ELIGIBILITY
- COSTS AND MATCH
- APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND FORMS
- PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA (Narrative)
- GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Page references are from the "Procedural Guide for the federal Recreational Trails Program dated June 4, 2007".

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q. If MAP-21 funds are available in 2016 (extended or reauthorized), will those funds also be used to fund 2015 applications that are due on September 15, 2015?

A. Yes, 2016 MAP-21 funds will be used if there are enough viable competitive grant requests submitted by September 15, 2015.

Q. What is the total amount available?

A. Up to \$8M will be available for the applications submitted September 15, 2015.

Q. Under MAP-21, is this multiple year funding to be offered again in 2016/17 or a one shot grant year? Will there be future rounds of funding if the project is not ready (due to land tenure issues)?

A. Depending on Congress, the current funding (MAP-21) may be extended or a new funding authorization may be passed. The future of RTP is dependent upon receipt of future funding through Congress.

Q. For acquisition projects, what is the timeline for creating the trail improvements on the property after grant award? If grant money is awarded to acquire land for a trailhead, are we expected to already have funding lined up to build the trailhead soon after the property is acquired? Or can funding for trail improvements be sought from other sources after RTP award? Is there an expected timeline?

A. There is a reasonable expectation that trail developed should take place within 3 – 4 years after the acquisition of the land.

Q. Is it acceptable to apply for this grant as well as the Habitat Conservation Fund Trails grant for the same project?

- A. Yes, it is possible that both grant programs can fund the same project scope if the project application meets the requirements of both programs including the separate Project Selection Criteria of both programs. The applicant should have an alternate funding plan in place in case one of the grants is not awarded.
- Q. Can we apply for funding for new trails for several city parks? Can this funding only be applied to one park/area? If we can do several parks, do they each need their own application?**
- A. More than one application may be submitted. Each separate project site must have its own application. A “project site” can include multiple trails within one defined park/open space area. Trails that are part of one system may be considered as one project.
- Q. Does an existing RTP application under the ATP funding affect the ability to apply for these funds discussed today.**
- A. No. An Applicant may also submit an application for the State Parks RTP cycle in the event the ATP funding is not awarded, or if the total project cost exceeds both grant programs (plus match) combined.
- Q. Will State Parks negotiate on the grant amount? For example, if we ask for an amount that is too high for funding, will you offer less?**
- A. No. The grant amount request will not be negotiated or reduced. Applicants are encouraged to ask for the amount that is needed in order to complete the Project.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY

- Q. Is a pedestrian tunnel under a road or highway eligible?**
- A. Yes, as long as the tunnel is connecting two existing recreational trails (not part of a sidewalk/public works project).
- Q. Is a bike pump track or bike skills park considered a trail?**
- A. RTP does not specifically include or exclude bike tracks, but the Applicant will need to explain how/why the project is creating a trail and is part of a trail system. Closed circuit tracks are not eligible.
- Q. If my Class I trail crosses a surface street, is the section where it crosses the street ineligible for cost reimbursement because it touches the street (handicap ramps, crosswalk striping or signage)?**
- A. Yes. Improvements that occur within the public road right-of-way are considered ineligible under RTP.
- Q. Regarding acquisitions, can this grant be used to purchase a parcel that will provide a new trail connection? Or can it only be used to acquire a trail footprint?**
- A. Purchasing a parcel that provides a new trail connection is eligible provided the purpose of the land acquisition is solely for trail purposes. Other uses on the parcel will not be permitted.

Q. Would a closed road that is converted to a paved multi-use trail and pedestrian path (adjacent to a road), or a pedestrian promenade be an eligible project?

A. Yes, a multi-use trail and pedestrian path (adjacent to a road) is eligible as long as the trail is specifically non-motorized, and has a physical barrier between the trail and adjacent road. A pedestrian promenade for trail use is eligible.

Q. Can we request funding only for “Development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection related to trails?”

A. No, not under the non-motorized category. This type of project is only eligible under the motorized category.

Q. Is a promenade dedicated to pedestrian, bikes, and joggers that will be attached to the side of an existing wharf and eligible project?

A. Yes, as long as the promenade is dedicated as a trail.

COSTS AND MATCH

Q. Are CEQA, planning, or appraisal costs incurred before the grant is awarded eligible for reimbursement or match?

A. No. Only costs that are incurred after the date of federal approval (the start date of the grant contract) are eligible for reimbursement or match.

Q. Will there be a 6-month (or any) “look-back” on match costs prior to the contract start date?

A. No. Only costs incurred after the date of federal approval and funding authorization will be considered eligible for reimbursement with RTP funds or as Match (Page 39).

Q. The landowner will require that we indemnify them for any causality or material losses associated with the project. This will likely increase our insurance premiums. Is the cost of extending insurance coverage to insure the newly constructed trail an eligible cost?

A. Yes. Premiums on hazard and liability insurance to cover personnel or property are an eligible pre-construction cost, subject to a maximum 25% of the Grant and Match amounts combined (Page 40).

Q. Can a Grantee’s employees be reimbursed for administration of the grant (e.g. bookkeeping and invoicing)?

A. Yes. For development projects, costs charged to the Project must be computed on actual time spent on a Project and supported by time and attendance records describing the work performed on the Project. Time estimations are not permitted (Page 40 – 42).

Q. Can RTP funds be used for beautifying the trail with native plants?

A. No. Beautification landscaping is not eligible under the RTP. Landscaping is only eligible if it is adjacent to the trail and its main purpose is to delineate and/or to prevent erosion on the trail.

Q. Landscaping for habitat and beautification is not eligible for grant funds, but could these expenses be used as match funds?

A. No. The same eligible cost rules apply to both the project costs *and* match costs.

Q. Does the grant cover tree trimming?

A. No. Routine maintenance is not eligible; however, if a tree must be removed to construct for a new trail alignment, that cost would be eligible.

Q. Are more points awarded for DG and plants for slopes vs. rock or concrete?

A. No. Refer to page 30, Criteria #9 for sustainable design features.

Q. Does the grant cover engineer erosion surveys?

A. Yes, if the survey occurs after the project start date. The survey is considered a pre-construction cost, which is subject to the maximum 25% of the Grant and required Match amounts combined.

Q. Does the grant cover security cameras?

A. Security cameras are not specifically *excluded* in the federal RTP guidance, so they will be deemed eligible for trail/trailhead safety, given the primary use by the general public is for the trail (not a hub for law enforcement). Call boxes are also eligible.

Q. Is work to create sustainable features, such as rolling dips, covered?

A. Yes, however, trail structures are to be used as a last resort when outslope drainage and sheet drainage techniques are not possible.

Q. Can match dollars include in-kind staff time or volunteer work time?

A. Yes. In-kind staff time or volunteer work time *spent directly on the project* can be counted toward match. In kind or volunteer hours must be tracked and documented based on actual time spent on the project. Time estimates are not acceptable.

Q. If the project is a trail project that has habitat impacts that require mitigation, would the mitigation costs be eligible for funding?

A. It is hoped the Applicant will avoid constructing a trail alignment in a sensitive habitat area. Where potentially significant impacts could not be entirely avoided, and mitigation measures are required, such as costs associated to consultations with permitting agencies, the costs will be eligible.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND FORMS

Q. What is the updated Resolution language?

A. The first paragraph should read, "Whereas, the "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)" provides funds to the State of California for Grants to federal, state, local and non-profit organizations to acquire, develop and/or maintain motorized and non-motorized trail Projects, and..."

Q. Will an unsigned resolution be accepted, in case we can't get our approving board/City Council before the grant application is due?

A. Applicants can submit a placeholder for the resolution and indicate the timeline of when the resolution will be adopted/accepted.

Q. CEQA: Does the NOE or NOD need to be stamped by the State Clearinghouse?

A. Yes.

Q. Does NEPA need to be stamped by the State Clearinghouse?

A. Yes. Federal applicants or projects on federal land that are required to complete NEPA, the ROD or FONSI needs to be submitted/stamped by the State Clearinghouse.

Q. If the CEQA documents include additional project phases, including a phase of work not identified in the grant proposal, is that acceptable?

A. Yes, the Applicant is not required to complete the CEQA process again as long as the project that is being submitted for the RTP is identified in the CEQA that will be submitted. Highlighting the applicable section related to the RTP is advisable.

Q. Can you please confirm CEQA must be complete by September 15, 2015?

A. If CEQA is not submitted by September 15th, please submit a placeholder that describes the current status of the CEQA review and estimated timeline for completion. It is advised the CEQA documents be submitted no later than the middle of November 2015.

Q. Please confirm if NEPA can be completed after the September 15 deadline if not on federal lands.

A. Correct. Non-federal applicants and projects not on federal land only require CEQA for the application process. NEPA will be required *if* the project is recommended for funding.

Q. What is the approximate cost of the NEPA process if the grant is recommended for funding?

A. Contact the local city or county the Project is located in to get an estimate. NEPA is not eligible for reimbursement from the RTP.

Q. The timeline mentions NEPA review by Caltrans, but on page 43 for CEQA it states that only federal applicants for projects on federal land are required to comply with NEPA. Can you explain the expectations for compliance?

A. Since RTP is a federally-funded program through the Federal Highway Administration, NEPA will be required of all projects recommended for funding. The difference is the timing of when NEPA is required. Federal applicants and projects on federal land are required to comply with NEPA for the initial application process (they do not go through the CEQA process). Non-federal applicants and projects not on federal land will comply with CEQA at the time of application, and then if recommended for funding, NEPA will be required (which will be reviewed/approved by Caltrans).

Q. Are there standard Caltrans forms to use to get an idea on what needs to be completed for the NEPA process?

A. The Preliminary Environmental Studies Form is a standard Caltrans form that is used for highway projects; however, Caltrans and State Parks are currently working to tailor the form for recreational trails projects. The form will be available for non-

federal applicants and projects not on federal land if the project is recommended for funding.

PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA (Narrative)

Criteria #5: Number of Project Users

Q. Does the State already have a range for each high/med/low category, or is this ranked by application comparisons for each cycle?

A. The State does not have a pre-established range. This criterion is ranked by application comparisons for each cycle statewide.

Q. Is there any consideration given for usage by trail size, i.e. would a 1 mile trail with 100 daily visitors be ranked as having a higher use than a 10 mile trail with 100 users?

A. No. This criterion does not differentiate between trail sizes.

Q. Provide examples of how this information can be collected and estimated.

A. If an existing trail or an additional segment of a trail is being constructed, a trail counter can collect data for a day and multiple that number by 365 to estimate average annual use. If a new trail will be developed that does not currently exist or connect to an existing trail, an Applicant may use a similar type trail in the area for estimated figures.

If there is no other similar type trail in the area, provide an estimate. The statewide estimated numbers are one method OGALS uses to consider if the trail use will be high, medium, or low compared to all statewide applications.

Criteria #6 Project User Accessibility

Q. Do the accessibility guidelines and regulations refer to State of California Building Codes or a different set of standards?

A. Non-paved trails must comply with the Federal Access Board guidelines regarding trail improvements. Paved trails must comply with the AASHTO standards. Built support facilities such as restrooms must comply with general accessibility standards governed by ADA.

Q. If you are submitting a trailhead, how do the accessibility standards work? Are the standards just for the trailhead itself?

A. Accessibility is applicable to the Project. If the Project is just the trailhead, the Applicant will address accessibility for the trailhead. If the trailhead will be paved, it should be constructed according to AASHTO standards. In addition, if a facility will be built at the trailhead, such as a restroom, that element falls under general accessibility standards governed by ADA.

Q. Which AASHTO standards are required for compliance?

A. All paved bikeway projects shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the Highway Design Manual, Chapter 1000 Bikeway Planning and Design.
<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/oppd/hdm/pdf/chp1000.pdf>

Criteria #11 Including Stakeholders

Q. How recent should stakeholders' inclusion be?

- A.** Involvement should be within the last year or two (it's a good idea to contact the stakeholders again and request if input has changed).

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Q. Is the grant paid up front, midway, or after completion?

- A.** The preferred method of payment for the RTP is reimbursement; however, advances are permitted under the RTP on a case-by-case basis when the reimbursement method would be too burdensome on a Grantee. (See page 64 – 74). The Grantee is required to submit at least one payment request every six months.